
Game Jams: A Method for Starting, Working On and Completing Games

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Abstract

Game jams are increasingly becoming a popular way of starting, working on and completing games. Despite game jams being a very limited timeframe for making these games, often varying from 8 to 48 hours, they are a great opportunity to collaborate, experiment and socialise. In this paper I position myself as a game designer and Ph.D. candidate who uses game jams to create the games that I explore and write about within my doctoral studies. During the jam, I aim to contribute to the understanding of the role of game jams in both research and practice, by making games and contributing to the discussion.

Author Keywords

Game jam; games research; game design

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.2. Information interfaces and presentation: User Interfaces.

Introduction

This paper presents a list of my skills and expertise as well as a list of games I have worked on during game jams. As a designer particularly interested in games played within public spaces, I feel as though the CHI conference is a great place to be making and playing these games, particularly to raise awareness of jams.



Figure 1. A tram jam that I organised in 2013 to explore making games for trams.

During this game jam I hope to explore the notion of designing games for specific contexts, in this case, for a conference context, to encourage inclusivity, participation and spectatorship.

List of skills and expertise

As a graduate of the game design degree at RMIT University, I am self sufficient in prototyping and polishing games, but very enthusiastic about working together with others. Unity3d¹ is the main tool I use to create my games. I often use Arduino² boards equipped with UnoJoy [2]. I am also well experienced in making art and assets for games.

¹ Unity3d is a game engine used for videogame development: <http://unity3d.com>

² Arduino is an open-source electronic prototyping platform allowing to create interactive electronic objects: <http://arduino.cc>

Previous jam games

Having participated in more than a dozen game jams over the past few years, I have been able to build up a portfolio of finished games created at game jams. Below you will find a selected collection of games created at these jams.

Turnover (2013)

Turnover [6] is a four player, multigravity, steal-the-ball-and-run frenzy. The game is played with the display placed or projected onto the floor, and the four players standing on one side of the display each. Every player's character has a different direction of gravity and plays the game facing that direction. The four players compete against stealing the ball and holding onto it until their timer reaches zero. The first player's timer to reach zero wins. The game was made at the second annual TIGJam in Melbourne, Australia and was worked on for a couple of months afterwards.



Figure 2. Four players playing Turnover, standing on one side of the screen each.



Figure 3. Two players playing Cart-Load-O-Fun on a train, with sensors attached to the poles.



Figure 4. Two players competing against each other, popping bubbles in Bubble Popper.

Turnover has won several awards including Freeplay 2013's Technical Innovation and Player Choice awards as well as iFEST 2013's Runner Up award. It has been selected to be showcased at IndieCade East 2014 in New York as well as at The Wild Rumpus #5 event in London. Turnover is a collaboration between Kalonica Quigley, Rhys Van Der Waerden, Shannon Barnes, Arden Beckwith and myself.

Cart-Load-O-Fun (2013)

Cart-Load-O-Fun [5] is a two player collaborative game designed for trams. It explores the intersection between play and commuting on public transport. Two players control one single character in the game and must work together to collect gems that randomly appear. The game is played by squeezing the sensors attached onto the poles in the space. The sensors are connected to an Arduino that acts as the interface between the sensors and the game. One of the players move the character left and right by squeezing and the other player moves it up and down.

Cart-Load-O-Fun was played by the public on Yarra Trams in Melbourne and on Sydney Trains in Sydney as part of the "CUSP: Designing into the Next Decade" exhibition by Object: Australian Design Centre [3]. The game was made at the first annual TIGJam in Melbourne, Australia. Cart-Load-O-Fun is a collaboration between Hsin Yang Ho, Joshua Platt and myself.

Bubble Popper (2012)

Bubble Popper [4] is a two player physical game that revolves around physical interaction. Bubble Popper is a collaboration between Hsin Yang Ho, Joshua Platt and

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Brief biography

I am Chad, a game designer from Melbourne, Australia. I tend to make physical, experimental and local multiplayer games. I enjoy crafting unique and memorable experiences that make people smile. I'm currently undertaking a PhD at RMIT University, looking into local multiplayer games and the New Arcade movement. My research currently takes place within the Exertion Games Lab. I co-direct Hovergarden, Melbourne's monthly gathering and celebration of local multiplayer games. I'm also an ambassador and game runner of Pop Up Playground, a group that is dedicated to playing and spreading physical, pervasive and street games. I have attended several game jams, including the Global Game Jam from 2012 to 2014, several Ludum Dare jams, Molyjam, TIGJam, CHI Game Jam 2013, and several other local game jams including a few that I have organized. I was also a co-organiser of 2013's CHI Game Jam in Paris, France [1]. In my spare time I find myself indulging in rapid game development (usually in the form of game jams), and playing physical games and card games.

Portfolio URL: <http://mr-chad.com>

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